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English Teacher Training Programs in Denmark, Sweden and Turkey

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Abstract

Teachers play one of the most important roles in reaching learning objectives. The qualifications of teachers in an education system reflect the potential of that system and directly influence the learners' achievement. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to compare Danish and Swedish English teacher training programs with that of Turkey and to reveal the similarities and differences to shed light on English teacher training in Turkey. Danish and Swedish English teacher training programs are analyzed, because these countries are ranked at the top by the average level of English skills amongst adults according to English Proficiency Index. The study is qualitative in nature and document analysis method is used to collect data about the relevant countries' teacher training programs. The results of the study suggest that the duration for teaching practices and job-shadowing should be longer. In addition, graduation examination and submitting a project/thesis should be a requirement for the graduation.

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1. Introduction

Teachers play one of the most important roles in reaching educational objectives in all areas of education. Teacher qualifications directly influence the academic achievements of the learners. In Turkey, teacher training programs have been exposed to changes through time; however, it is still argued that teacher qualifications are not at the desired level including English language teachers. Field requirements for foreign language teachers were announced in 2008 by

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Turkish Ministry of National Education. In this context, the responsibilities of a foreign language teacher were identified in this regulation. Genç (2014) considered this action as a positive development for the standardization of the teachers' qualities in Turkey.

In this study, it is aimed to compare English Language teacher training programs in Sweden and Denmark with that of Turkey, to highlight the similarities and differences in several aspects and propose some suggestions for English teacher training programs in Turkey. Swedish and Danish systems are chosen for the analysis, because these countries have very high proficiency according to English Proficiency Index which attempts to rank countries by the average level of English skills amongst adults. In this index, Turkey is categorized as the very low proficiency and ranked in the 50th order according to 2015 rankings. For this reason, it is believed that analyzing these programs through comparative education can make contribution to improve English Teacher Training programs in Turkey.

2. Review of Literature

Tok and Arıbaş (2008) investigated the foreign language teaching in many aspects including the role of foreign language teachers during the adaptation process to European Union. They revealed that in more than half of the EU countries, a foreign language was taught by a form teacher at elementary schools and by a subject matter teacher at secondary schools. In addition, a foreign language teacher had the proficiency to teach a subject matter including language matters in most European countries.

Ada and Üstün (2008) compared Swedish and Turkish educational systems in several aspects. They particularly chose to study Swedish context, because as a Scandinavian country, its educational system attracted other countries' attention as a country that met the needs of any modern society. At the end of their study, they suggested that a teacher must undergo a pedagogical training to be employed as a teacher and teachers must be exposed to in-service training throughout their career to follow innovations in their fields.

Kilimci (2009) conducted a study comparing teacher training programs of some European Countries with that of Turkey. In this study, she highlighted that there was a movement towards renovation and decentralization in many EU countries in teacher training, employment and qualities.

Gökçe and Celep (2011) compared the educational Systems of Turkey, Malta, Ireland, Spain, Sweden, Portugal, Finland, Greece, Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark in several aspects. They revealed that while Finland, Belgium and Netherlands had decentralized educational management systems, both Turkish and Greek Ministries of Education had centralized systems. Responsibility for funding educational institutions was shared by the states and local officials in Sweden, Spain and Finland. Frame of curriculum and activities were constructed at the national level in both Turkey and Greece, while municipalities, schools and autonomy groups participate in curriculum development process in Spain and Sweden.

Mirici (2014) highlighted European policy and practices in training foreign language teachers and gave some implications about their implementations in Turkish education system. He suggested that the principles of Common European Framework (CEF) should be adapted to Turkish foreign language education system and standards should be determined about qualifications of a foreign language teacher in terms of these principles. In addition, this study suggested that foreign language teacher training programs should be revised and updated at the universities and requirements of various organizations should be taken into consideration in accordance with teacher qualifications.

Saydı (2014) studied European Commission's approach to the problematics of foreign language teacher and interculturality teaching. She emphasized that intercultural and cross-cultural education should be one of the indispensable duties of a foreign language teacher. Furthermore, in this study it was suggested that foreign language teachers should participate in exchange programs to have cultural awareness about the target language community.

Polatcan (2014) compared Swedish education system with that of Turkey in terms of purpose, structures and processes. He highlighted that the parliament took the decision about education and Ministry of National Education implemented the plans and policies in Sweden, but in Turkey Ministry of National Education was the decision-maker.

3. Method

This study compares English Teacher Training programs at colleges and universities in Sweden, Denmark and Turkey in terms of entry and graduation requirements, content of the programs, teaching practices and job-shadowing.

This is a qualitative study and document analysis method is used to collect data about the teacher training programs in these countries. Document analysis consists of scanning of the written documents containing the facts and events aimed to be searched. At the end of the study, it is hypothesized that the differences between these systems can shed light on to improve teacher training programs in Turkish context.

4. Findings

In this part of the study, English teacher training programs in Sweden, Denmark and Turkey were compared in some aspects and data collected were presented in Tables. Table 1 displayed the entry requirements for being accepted at English teacher training Programs in three countries.

Table 1. The entry requirements for English teacher training Programs

Countries	Requirements
Sweden	High school diploma, high school grade point average, English language proficiency exam (TOEFL, IELTS or equivalent)
Denmark	High school diploma, high school grade point average, English language proficiency exam (TOEFL, IELTS or equivalent)
Turkey	High school diploma, high school grade point average, YDS exam.

Comparing the entry requirements of English teacher training programs in Sweden, Denmark and Turkey, the requirements in Sweden and Denmark were very similar to each other. The main difference between Turkey and two other countries were that high school graduates must take YDS exam which tests only one language skill in Turkey though those in Sweden and Denmark must take a TOEFL or IELTS or equivalent exam measuring four language skills. Table 2 showed the requirements of graduation from English Teacher Training programs in Sweden, Denmark and Turkey.

Table 2. Requirements of Graduation in Sweden, Denmark and Turkey

Countries	Graduation Requirements
Sweden	Between 180-330 ECTS average 240, Attendance, Passing the exams, Completing teaching practices, Passing Graduation examination, Project/thesis
Denmark	Between 180-330 ECTS average 240, Attendance, Passing the exams, Completing teaching practices, Passing Graduation examination, Project/thesis
Turkey	240 ECTS, Attendance, Passing the exams, Completing teaching practices/School experience, Having a grade point average (some universities)

According to Table 2, graduation requirements in Sweden and Denmark were almost similar. ECTS, attendance, passing the exams, completing teaching practices, passing graduation examination, project/thesis were the requirements for the graduation. Comparing with that of Turkey, passing graduation examination and submitting a project/thesis were not the type of requirements for graduation in Turkey.

Swedish and Danish English teacher training programs consisted of the following three basic elements: main subject, pedagogic subject and teaching practice. However, they were not defined as separate areas. Table 3 indicated the content of the main subjects in Sweden, Denmark and Turkey.

Table 3. The content of the main subjects in Sweden, Denmark and Turkey

<i>Countries</i>	<i>Applied Linguistics</i>	<i>Comparative Linguistics</i>	<i>Socio-Linguistics</i>	<i>Literature</i>	<i>Computer and Instructional technology</i>
Sweden	X	X	X	X	X
Denmark	X	X	X	X	X
Turkey	X	-	X	X	X

According to Table 3, English teacher training programs in three countries exhibited similarities, because applied linguistics, socio-linguistics, literature and computer technologies were covered in the curriculum of these programs. Although comparative linguistics was a part of the curriculum in Sweden and Denmark, there was no specific lecture on this topic in Turkey.

While teacher training programs in Denmark lasted for four years on bachelor level, in Sweden, the length of the program depended on the target age group. The program for those who teach younger pupils was shorter than the program for older pupils. As from Turkey, the programs in common took four years, but in most of the universities, students who had not sufficient English proficiency or failed at language proficiency exam had to take one year prep. program at the beginning. Table 4 displayed the teaching practices and job-shadowing in Sweden, Denmark and Turkey.

Table 4. Teaching Practices and job-shadowing in Sweden, Denmark and Turkey.

<i>Countries</i>	<i>Teaching Practices and job-shadowing</i>
Sweden	One day a week throughout most of the period of study.
Denmark	Students spend a period of 7–9 consecutive weeks on a school placement in either the third or fourth year. 15% of all teaching period.
Turkey	Final year (senior students), two semesters, part time.

According to Table 4, while students in Sweden spent one day a week throughout most of the period of study as teaching practices and job-shadowing, students in Denmark spent 15% of all teaching period in practice. However, in Turkey, job-shadowing took place at the final year at schools in the form of observation, interview and practice. It can be stated that duration for job-shadowing in Sweden and Denmark was longer than that of Turkey.

In Denmark, teacher-training programs stressed the importance of establishing links between theory and practice. The objective was that practice should be incorporated into the teaching. A written bachelor project has been core, which must be based on a subject related to the pedagogic subject. However, Sweden did not have a national framework for linking theory and practice, but there were local variations on these issues.

In Denmark, the competency requirement for primary and lower-secondary school teachers (1–9 (10)) was a bachelor or professional bachelor's degree. This was also the case in Sweden for the younger age groups in primary and lower-secondary schools. The competency requirement for teachers in upper-secondary schools in Denmark and Sweden, was a master's degree (second cycle, C2) with subsequent specialization in pedagogy.

Women as the typical student profile dominated on programs for teachers in Denmark, Sweden and Turkey. As from the qualifications of the lecturers teaching at these programs, at least 30% of lecturers on teacher- training programs should have research qualifications in Sweden. There must be at least three C3 (ph.D.) lecturers to start and sustain an English Language Teacher Training Program in Turkey.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, English teacher training programs in Sweden, Denmark and Turkey were compared in some aspects, similarities and differences were highlighted to make contribution to improvement of English teacher training Programs in Turkey. Comparing the entry requirements of English teacher training programs, the main difference between Turkey and other two countries were the type of test taken in admittance. While candidates were tested in four language skills in Sweden and Denmark, they took a test evaluating only one skill in Turkey.

Graduation requirements exhibited mainly similar characteristics in Sweden, Denmark and Turkey in terms of ECTS, attendance, passing the exams and completing teaching practices. However, passing graduation examination and submitting a project/thesis were not the type of requirements for graduation in Turkey. Mirici (2014) suggested that the principles of Common European Framework (CEF) should be adapted to Turkish foreign language education system and standards should be determined about qualifications of a foreign language teacher in terms of these principles.

As of the content of the programs, similar characteristics could be observed in three countries except from comparative linguistics. There was no specific lecture on this topic in Turkey. Saydı (2014) emphasized that intercultural and cross-cultural education should be one of the indispensable duties of a foreign language teacher and suggested that foreign language teachers should participate in exchange programs to have cultural awareness about the target language community.

It can be stated that duration for teaching practices and job-shadowing in Sweden and Denmark was longer than that of Turkey. The findings of Ada and Üstün (2008) were in consistent with the present study, because they also emphasized the importance of pedagogical training for teachers. The competency requirement for teachers in upper-secondary schools in Denmark and Sweden was a master's degree with subsequent specialization in pedagogy. However, a master's degree was not a requirement to teach at primary and secondary levels of Turkish education system. In conclusion, the following recommendations are given to improve English Teacher Training Programs in Turkey.

- The duration for teaching practices and job-shadowing should be longer.
- Teachers should be encouraged to have a master's degree and regulations should be revised in this direction.
- Teacher candidates should take a language test in four language skills before admittance to the program.
- Passing graduation examination and submitting a project/thesis should be mandatory for graduation.
- The topics on culture should be included in the programs to create more cultural awareness.

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